



# DIOCESE OF COVINGTON

Office of the Bishop

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18 March 2020

My dear Friends,

Praised be Jesus Christ! We find ourselves in what for most of us will be a once-in-a-lifetime situation with the Coronavirus pandemic. Our lives have been and are being altered dramatically. It is as though every aspect of our lives is being affected and the situation seems to change almost hourly. This is also affecting our faith life, at least in terms of our worship.

We have been following very closely the information that the Center for Disease Control (CDC) has been providing for us. I have also spoken to fellow bishops, have established a Coronavirus task force to study the situation and make recommendations in how we should address it locally, have met this morning with our Deans and Vicars, have asked for and received from almost every pastor their experience and that of their parishioners from this past weekend Masses. Taking all this into consideration and especially having taken it to prayer, the following is our response.

1. **Public weekday and Sunday Masses in every parish church, in every chapel and oratory, in every religious house, in any of our institutions are suspended effective Friday, 20 March 2020.** Since the situation is so fluid, **this suspension will be in effect until further notice.** There are no exceptions to this suspension.
2. **Public celebration of the Sacraments and other public forms of worship are suspended indefinitely.** This includes Lenten Penance Services, other Lenten devotions, celebrations of First Holy Communion, Communion Services, etc. Obviously, this is not an exhaustive list.
3. **The Sacrament of Reconciliation (confession) and Anointing of the Sick** are permitted on a private basis upon request.
4. **Funerals, burial services, and already scheduled weddings are permitted but attendance must be limited to a maximum of 10 participants.** This includes the celebrant.
5. Parish priests are advised to provide the faithful with **Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament** for a brief period each day. Attendees are directed to practice social distancing.
6. **All parish office activity is to be suspended for a period of two weeks beginning on Friday, 20 March.** After that date, parish office activity should be limited to **a few days a week at most with a minimum number of staff.**

7. All parish meetings of any kind are likewise to be canceled.
8. All parish socials of any sort are to be canceled. This includes, but is not limited to, fish fries (eat-in or carry-out) and bingo.

All previously published diocesan protocols addressing the Covid-19 remain in force.

The Eucharist is the source and summit of the Christian life. The other sacraments, and indeed all ecclesiastical ministries and works of the apostolate, are bound up with the Eucharist and are oriented toward it. For in the Blessed Eucharist is contained the whole spiritual good of the Church, namely, Christ himself, our Pasch. (Catechism of the Catholic Church, 1324)

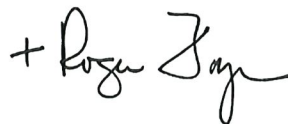
To suspend the public celebration of the Eucharist and other sacraments is the most difficult decision I have ever had to make in my 47 years as a priest and 18 years as a bishop. I make it with a heavy heart and with profound sadness. I encourage all our faithful to continue to pray at home and to make a Spiritual Communion often. I know many of the faithful will be disappointed and perhaps even angry, at being denied access to the most Holy Eucharist. I don't blame you. I've received numerous messages from people who are distraught that we might have to take this action as well as messages from people who feel we are being negligent in not cancelling everything. This is not an easy time and does not have an easy solution. Decisions must be made on fact and in faith taking into account all of God's people. Human respect cannot play a part in such weighty decisions.

Some people will feel we have not gone far enough, and others will feel that we have gone too far. But given the current situation and with the facts that have been provided to us, it is as though there is no alternative. And if we are going to suspend the celebration of the Eucharist, we cannot then go on in other areas of our pastoral ministry as if there is no change and everything is fine. Everything we do and who we are flows from the Eucharist.

These are difficult and trying times but, with deep faith and sure hope, we will get through them and hopefully better appreciate all the good things the Lord has given us for our journey, the most important of which is His Body and Blood.

Let us keep each other in prayer.

Yours devotedly in the Eucharistic Lord,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Roger Foys".

Most Reverend Roger J. Foys, D.D.  
Bishop of Covington